

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 02014 01 OF 02 281539Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
IO-13 MCT-01 HA-05 /085 W
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R 281507Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0706
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCOMSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBLIN 02014

E.O. 11652: GDS-1
TAGS: SHUM, UK, EI
SUBJECT: AN ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN
IRELAND

REF: LONDON 10004

CONGEN BELFAST DRAFTED THIS MESSAGE JUNE 28.

1. SUMMARY. THE PROVISIONAL IRA CONTINUES THE PATTERN OF RECENT DAYS -- ATTACKS ON SECURITY FORCES AND THE KILLING OF AN "INFORMER" ON THE SOUTHERN BORDER, AND LESS SUCCESSFUL ACTION IN BELFAST. ALMOST A MAN A DAY HAS DIED IN THE VIOLENCE THE PAST COUPLE OF WEEKS. THIS IS HIGH COMPARED TO THE TREND SINCE MID-FEBRUARY, BUT A SENIOR ARMY OFFICER COMMENTED IN PRIVATE THAT MILITARY METHODS OF SUPPRESSION ALONE CANNOT REDUCE THE OVERALL LEVEL MUCH BELOW THE CURRENT AVERAGE. END SUMMARY.

2. REACTION TO ARMY KILLINGS: THE THREE BOMB-CARRYING PIRA MEMBERS AND THE PROTESTANT PASSERBY KILLED BY ARMY UNDERCOVER MEN IN BELFAST THE NIGHT OF JUNE 20 (REFTEL) WERE BURIED BY THEIR RESPECTIVE COMMUNITIES JUNE 23.

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PAGE 02 DUBLIN 02014 01 OF 02 281539Z

PIRA CELEBRATED THE FUNERAL BY TRYING TO CATCH SECURITY FORCES WITH A BOMB A FEW BLOCKS FROM THE CORTEGE. THE PLAN WENT AWRY: SEVEN WOMEN WERE SLIGHTLY INJURED, ALONG WITH THREE POLICEMEN AND A SOLDIER. PIRA LATER IN THE DAY COMPLETED THE TRIO OF BOMBS CORRESPONDING TO ITS KILLED BY SETTING OFF TWO BLAST INCENDIARIES THAT DESTROYED A CLOTHING FACTORY A HALF A MILE FROM THE

CONSUL'S RESIDENCE.

3. A SENIOR GENERAL COMMENTED TO US THAT WHEN A "WRONG" (I.E., INNOCENT) MAN IS PICKED UP OR SHOT, COMMUNITY RESENTMENT IS SHARP AND SWIFT. IN THIS CASE, THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY ACCEPTED THE THREE DEATHS WITHOUT HULLABALOO. THE UNFORTUNATE PROTESTANT WAS WELL KNOWN IN HIS COMMUNITY -- SO WELL KNOWN THAT HIS DEATH PASSED WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT REACTION.

4. BORDER DEATHS: PIRA JUNE 24 STOPPED THE CAR OF A RETIRED POSTMAN IN SOUTH ARMAGH NEAR THE SOUTHERN BORDER, LEFT THE WIFE ON THE ROAD AND LATER KILLED THE MAN. THEY CLAIMED HE WAS AN INFORMER, WHICH THE POLICE AND ARMY DENIED, AND TOLD OTHER "INFORMERS" IN THE AREA TO CLEAR OUT. THE HOODED BODY WAS LEFT IN THE MAN'S BOOBY-TRAPPED CAR AND COULD NOT BE RECOVERED UNTIL TWO DAYS LATER. ON THE 25TH PIRA MEN FIRING FROM THE REPUBLIC INTO COUNTY FERMANAGH KILLED ONE PART-TIME SOLDIER OF THE ULSTER DEFENSE REGIMENT AND WOUNDED ANOTHER. THEY USED ONE OF THE AMERICAN M-60 MACHINEGUNS. BRITISH OFFICIALS TELL US THAT THE RECENT ACTIONS NEAR THE SOUTHERN BORDER ARE THE EXPERT WORK OF AN EXPERIENCED AND CAPABLE PIRA ACTIVE SERVICE UNIT OPERATING FROM THE REPUBLIC.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 DUBLIN 02014 01 OF 02 281539Z

5. THE BLANKET PRISONERS: ATTENTION HAS TURNED FROM THE PIRA PRISONERS IN THE MAZE PRISON PROTESTING FOR POLITICAL STATUS. THE CURRENT ISSUE OF BELFAST'S "REPUBLICAN NEWS" (SPOKESMAN FOR PIRA) MADE A REVEALING ADMISSION: IT BLAMED ON POOR ORGANIZATION THE SHOWING OF ONLY 150 PEOPLE FOR A DEMONSTRATION IN THE CITY CENTER, WHICH IT SAID HAD LED TO DEMORALIZATION. AND IT JUDGED AS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE THE MOUNTING OF AN EFFECTIVE DEMONSTRATION QUICKLY "WITHOUT THE TEMPER OF THE PEOPLE BEING RAISED BY AN IMMEDIATE STATE OUTRAGE".

6. IN AN UNPUBLICIZED MOVE, THE AUTHORITIES EARLIER IN THE MONTH MOVED THE 300-ODD PROTESTING PIRA PRISONERS INTO DIFFERENT CELL BLOCKS WHILE PRISON GUARDS CLEANED OUT THEIR REGULAR CELLS -- STINKING FROM EXCRETA AND ROTTEN FOOD THE PRISONERS HAD DEPOSITED ON THE FLOORS. ON RETURN, ONE BLOCK OF SOME 40 PRISONERS STARTED TO USE THEIR CHAMBER POTS AGAIN. THIS APPARENT BREAK IN DISCIPLINE IS THE FIRST SUCH SIGN WE HAVE NOTED.

7. COMMENT: THE PROVISIONALS HAVE A PECULIAR MENTALITY. ONE WOULD THINK THE STRONG REACTION AGAINST THEIR

RECENT KILLINGS ON THE BORDER WOULD MAKE THEM HESITANT, BUT THEY MAY SEE THIS ACTIVITY ONLY AS EMINENTLY SUCCESSFUL. IN BELFAST, HOWEVER, THEY APPEAR TO BE MOMENTARILY OFF BALANCE. IN ANY EVENT, AS THE GENERAL COMMENTED, MILITARY METHODS ARE UNLIKELY TO DESTROY PIRA. FORTUNATELY, THE TRUCE BETWEEN THE REPUBLICAN AND LOYALIST PARAMILITARIES, WHETHER AGREED OR IMPLICIT, STILL HOLDS. (WE NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT THREE PERSONS HAVE BEEN SHOT IN RECENT DAYS WITHOUT APPARENT MOTIVE.) LOYALIST PARAMILITARY LEADERS AT THE MOMENT ARE EVEN TALKING ABOUT A POLITICAL WAY OUT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND.

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 02014 02 OF 02 281539Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 DUBLIN 02014

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